

Message

From: Kaiser, Steven [kaiser.steven@epa.gov]
Sent: 2/10/2017 4:17:19 PM
To: Carla Morgan (cmorgan@eastchicago.com) [cmorgan@eastchicago.com]; McCoy, Lisa [LMcCoy@idem.IN.gov]
CC: Garypie, Catherine [garypie.catherine@epa.gov]; Toney, Marcy [toney.marcy@epa.gov]; Kyte, Larry [kyte.larry@epa.gov]; Nelson, Leverett [nelson.leverett@epa.gov]
Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
 US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
 February 10, 2017

CLTV - Funding approved to help East Chicago's lead problems
 NWIT - UPDATE: Governor declares disaster emergency at East Chicago Superfund site
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<http://cltv.com/2017/02/09/funding-approved-to-help-east-chicagos-lead-problems/>
 Funding approved to help East Chicago's lead problems
 POSTED 10:41 PM, FEBRUARY 9, 2017, BY WGN WEB DESK

EAST CHICAGO, Ill. -- Indiana has approved funding to help clean up widespread lead contamination in East Chicago.

It is a state aid package the former Indiana governor, now vice-president, Mike Pence, had denied saying the state had already done enough to help.

But officials appealed again and said local resources have been stretched to the breaking point.

The EPA assessed the level of lead and arsenic contamination on what had already been designated a federal superfund site and placed on a priority list for cleanup.

Indiana will be asking for 2 million dollars from Washington. The state also hopes to get federal help replacing local water pipes.

The EPA says up to 90 percent of the service lines here could be made of lead.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/governor-declares-disaster-emergency-at-east-chicago-superfund-site/article_83514c45-fba1-5617-bf84-d666e6cc4ce5.html

UPDATE: Governor declares disaster emergency at East Chicago Superfund site

· Northwest Indiana Times Sarah Reese and Dan Carden Feb 9, 2017

INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Eric Holcomb signed an executive order Thursday declaring a disaster emergency for East Chicago's USS Lead Superfund site.

The declaration provides for 30 days of enhanced state assistance for the estimated 100 residents who have yet to relocate from the lead contaminated West Calumet Housing Complex, as well as other lead-impacted citizens in the affected area.

Specifically, the state will aggressively seek \$2 million in federal funding to demolish West Calumet, along with additional federal resources to remediate soil and replace lead water pipes in adjacent neighborhoods.

Holcomb also ordered state agencies to seek federal approval for more lead testing sites throughout the city, promote the development of new, affordable rental housing in East Chicago and create a one-stop website for residents to keep up with federal, state and local progress reports.

In addition, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security is empowered to obtain any services needed on an emergency basis from any level of government.

"What I want to do is make sure we get this right," Holcomb said. "Putting a 30-day shot clock on our efforts, I think, will help us not just corral, but (also) focus all of our efforts — the federal, state and local efforts — on it right now."

State Rep. Earl Harris, Jr., D-East Chicago, said he was ecstatic when he learned of Holcomb's emergency declaration.

"I greatly appreciate the fact that Gov. Holcomb sees what's going on in East Chicago and realizes that the citizens need help," Harris said. "I'm so happy to hear that the state is stepping up."

Harris has been working with state Sen. Lonnie Randolph, D-East Chicago, to advance legislation in the General Assembly that would make permanent many of the services included in Holcomb's emergency order and provide additional state funding to the city and East Chicago schools.

East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland said in a news release Holcomb's declaration is good news for East Chicago and its residents.

"We greatly appreciate Governor Holcomb's declaration today, and his compassion for our residents. We are working on ways that we can leverage the city's ... resources with the state of Indiana's resources and expertise to efficiently address the problems facing these Hoosier families," Copeland said in the release.

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., also lauded Holcomb's decision, saying he looks forward to combining state and federal efforts to help residents affected by the Superfund site.

"It is vitally important that we keep our focus on assisting the impacted families in East Chicago," Donnelly said.

Holcomb's predecessor, now-Vice President Mike Pence, rejected Mayor Copeland's request for an emergency declaration before Pence left office one month ago.

In a letter, Pence's general counsel Mark Ahearn said the state already had provided adequate assistance.

Residents and community groups heavily criticized Pence last year for not meeting personally with those affected by the lead and arsenic contamination. His office periodically had representatives on-site.

Holcomb told The Times that he expects to visit the affected area in East Chicago in the next few weeks.

The Republican said he's also optimistic that the state's emergency response ultimately could prove to be a model for other states or localities to use in similar situations.

"We're not alone, and there could be some good news to come out of this at the end of the day," Holcomb said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency added the 322-acre site to the Superfund list in April 2009.

Last summer, the city told more than 1,000 residents at the West Calumet Housing Complex — located in the first of three residential cleanup zones — they had to move out after sampling revealed soil in some areas contained more than 200 times the EPA's allowable limit for lead.

Residents living at more than 1,000 properties in zones 2 and 3 have not been told to relocate, and the EPA began excavating contaminated soil from their yards in October.

The EPA has said it does not expect Trump administration changes to affect Superfund resources. However, officials said at a recent open house that funding is not yet in place for indoor cleaning in one of the cleanup zones.

Residents also learned in December that the EPA found elevated lead levels in drinking water at 18 homes in the Superfund site.

While the testing was intended to determine if excavation might cause lead in pipes to become dislodged and enter the water supply, the EPA has said it views the sampling as representative of the city's entire system.

Up to 90 percent of East Chicago's water service lines could be lead, and the EPA has recommended all the city's more than 28,000 residents should use certified water filters.

<https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/governor-issues-disaster-order-over-east-chicago-lead/e6c6d931-ac45-4c33-8dac-42c9f4193faa>

Indiana Governor Issues Disaster Order Over East Chicago Lead

Associated Press, Michael Puente

WBEZ AP Michael Puente February 9, 2017

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Gov. Eric Holcomb on Thursday issued a state disaster declaration over East Chicago's lead contamination problem, nearly two months after his predecessor rejected the city's request.

Holcomb approved the 30-day emergency declaration, saying state agencies will focus on helping find new homes for about 100 residents remaining at a polluted public housing complex and discussing options with new federal agency leaders.

The governor said he hopes the declaration will accelerate coordination among local, state and federal agencies. Other plans include directing \$2 million toward demolition of the West Calumet Housing Complex, along with seeking federal assistance for soil cleanup and the replacement of lead water pipes throughout the industrial city along Lake Michigan.

"What I want to do is make sure we get this right," Holcomb said. "Putting a 30-day shot clock on our efforts, I think, will help us not just corral, but focus all of our efforts, both the federal and state efforts, and the local efforts on it right now."

East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland sought the disaster designation from then-Gov. Mike Pence, who is now vice president. The mayor was hoping it would make more state programs available to residents dealing with the contamination, which has forced more than 1,000 people to move out of the West Calumet complex.

Pence's office said in December that the declaration wasn't needed because federal and state agencies were already addressing the situation.

Last summer, Copeland ordered the evacuation of the 40-year-old public housing complex, where about 700 children lived, because of severe soil contamination. The site was once home to a lead products factory. Some yards had lead levels more than 70 times the federal safety standard. Federal officials have given residents until the end of March to find new homes.

East Chicago City Attorney Carla Morgan told The (Northwest Indiana) Times that local officials appreciated Holcomb's decision.

"We're working closely with the governor's office to figure out how to best help our residents," Morgan said.

<http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2017/02/09/state-of-emergency-declared-in-east-chicago-after-lead-contamination/> - link to Dorothy Tucker's video

State Of Emergency Declared In East Chicago After Lead Contamination

EAST CHICAGO, Ind. (CBS) — Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb has declared a state of emergency for the East Chicago Superfund site. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the 322 acre area has lead in its soil.

CBS 2's Dorothy Tucker reports.

Candice Cobb is just one of many East Chicago, Indiana residents ready to leave the West Calumet Housing Complex.

"I took all the pictures off the wall," she said.

Cobb's family was among those targeted for relocation last July, after the area was deemed unsafe because of high lead levels in the ground.

Out of 332 families, 175 have moved and left behind a ghost town of empty and boarded up units.

East Chicago residents and Mayor Anthony Copeland welcomed Gov. Holcomb granting a disaster declaration to the city.

"It means the Calvary is coming," Copeland said.

Copeland has been asking for a disaster declaration for months. Now, he's happy that the state government heard the plight of area residents.

“That expertise and the unlimited type of resources that may be needed to solve this crisis, that door can now be opened,” he said.

<http://wboi.org/post/holcomb-declares-disaster-lead-contaminated-east-chicago-area#stream/0>

Holcomb Declares Disaster In Lead-Contaminated East Chicago Area

Annie Ropeik , WBOI

Gov. Eric Holcomb is declaring a disaster in a lead-contaminated neighborhood of East Chicago, Indiana. The order, announced Thursday, fulfills a request that former Gov. Mike Pence denied before he left office.

In the declaration, Holcomb says he'll ask for federal assistance to relocate residents still living in the affected area. And those families say they need all the assistance they can get.

The 30-day emergency declaration spans the city's 322-acre Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site, which includes the Calumet neighborhood and around 3,000 residents.

The area's soil and hundreds of homes are contaminated with lead and arsenic left behind by a shuttered smelting plant. The city found out about the worst contamination last July.

In December, East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland wrote to then-governor Pence and then-Lt. Gov. Holcomb, asking them to use emergency declaration powers to trigger federal assistance.

Pence denied the request before leaving office. Now Holcomb, his successor, has granted it.

“What I want to do is make sure that we get this right,” Holcomb says. “Putting a 30-day shot-clock on our efforts, I think, will help us not just corral but focus all of our efforts – both the federal and the state efforts, and the local efforts – on it right now.”

Holcomb's executive order is one of a several issued Feb. 9. It asks the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority to allocate \$2 million for demolition of the West Calumet Housing Complex.

Holcomb's office estimates 100 people still live in the complex, though lawyers and resident's say it's actually at least 100 entire families – including Keesha Daniels'. She's an East Chicago native who's been trying to move out of West Calumet for months. She and her neighbors were ordered to do so last July so the city could tear down their homes.

“Every day is a struggle. It's a struggle, and it gets worse,” Daniels says. “This is really a sickening thing to have to tell your kids that we don't know where we're going.”

Daniels says she's grateful Holcomb is paying attention, though she wishes the disaster declaration had come months ago. She says it would help if more landlords would take the federal housing voucher she received to help her relocate.

Holcomb's order doesn't address those specifics, but it does say the state will find a social service contractor to help residents resettle by the end of March. That's when the city can to seek federal permission to put remaining residents in temporary housing.

The disaster declaration also says the state will spend the next month petitioning “the new secretaries of the appropriate federal agencies” for help with relocation and demolition. And it says the state will seek EPA grant funding to replace lead pipes in parts of the Calumet neighborhood.

The EPA measured high levels of lead in some homes’ drinking water last year. Officials have said a temporary funding freeze at the agency wouldn’t affect clean-up work in the Superfund, but it’s unclear if that would apply to Holcomb’s request.

Holcomb’s order also covers health and social services across the Superfund. It describes a planned state website that will list status updates on the situation. It asks state health officials to get federal permission to conduct blood lead testing at Women, Infant and Children clinics in and around East Chicago. And it says the state will keep working to “identify and finance” new affordable housing options in the area.

Finally, it makes a request of East Chicago’s mayor, asking him to send specifics to the state by March 5 on what other aid the city needs, and what federal resources it can access. City officials did not respond to an interview request by deadline.

Indiana Public Broadcasting’s Nick Janzen contributed reporting from East Chicago, and Brandon Smith contributed reporting from Indianapolis. This post has been updated.

<http://www.wimsradio.com/2017/02/09/gov-holcomb-had-a-busy-thursday/>
Gov. Holcomb had a busy Thursday

Posted on: February 9th, 2017 by News@wimsradio.com

Indiana Governor Eric J. Holcomb issued a pardon, declared a disaster emergency in East Chicago and announced the termination of contract discussions with Agile Networks, among other actions. The governor’s executive order for East Chicago also calls for the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority to create and maintain a web page that provides status updates, progress reports and other information on local, state and federal efforts. Finally, the order requests that City of East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland provide a written assessment by March 5 of additional resources and services the city believes are needed—and any other federal resources that may be available—to assist with the area. The governor also signed an executive order this morning to pardon Keith Cooper for his 1997 felony robbery conviction in Elkhart County. In addition to these two executive orders, the governor announced his decision to terminate contract discussions between the Indiana Finance Authority (IFA) and Agile Networks to manage, operate and market the state’s communications infrastructure—including cell towers. IFA and Agile Networks have been unable to come to an agreement on the terms of the contract.